



# TEACHING HANDBOOK

PREPARED BY THE CENTRE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING SERVICES



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## INTRODUCTION

David Graham, Provost and Vice-President,  
Academic Affairs

One of Concordia's greatest strengths is the size and the diversity of its student and faculty population. Over 40,000 students from more than 150 countries and more than 20 different first nations attend Concordia. Concordia is also proud to be the home of more than one third of all students with disabilities in Quebec and from every part of the socioeconomic spectrum. Regardless of their status, more than 75 per cent of our students take 24 credits or less in an academic year. This is both a great strength and a great challenge. In fact, a typical classroom at Concordia is a sea of different languages, cultures, ages and abilities. You may find these difficult to navigate at first, but a great majority of faculty members at Concordia find this diversity of perceptions, opinions, political and religious backgrounds an extraordinarily stimulating and rewarding environment in which to teach.

If the diversity of our students is one of our greatest strengths, the knowledge and talents of our professors are two of our greatest resources. As a Concordia professor, you will be called upon to train students to think critically, to be sceptical, creative, and respectful; respectful of opinions, cultures and religion, but also of the environment and of the ways people, all over the world, struggle to earn a living with dignity. As a Concordia professor, you will always strive not only to train students but to educate them.

No matter how good and thorough an education you provide, some of your students will find themselves in

difficulty. Some will struggle for financial reasons, some for legal ones, some because they cannot adapt to Montreal, some because of their academic background, some because of lack of motivation or engagement in their studies, and some because they have experienced a personal or medical trauma. These problems require professional help, and the University offers a series of services aimed at helping students deal with some of these issues (please see the list provided at the end of this handbook).

I am writing to ask for your assistance in ensuring that your students are aware of the services Concordia offers. You can be certain that taking a few minutes at the beginning of each semester to mention the student services and urge your students to take advantage of them when they need to do so will be of inestimable help to some of your students.

For many of our students, graduating from Concordia is truly a life-changing experience. Many of them have invested an extraordinary amount of time and effort in graduating. Many have taken courses at night, over a period of years, while dealing with full-time jobs and family responsibilities. As a professor, you have a huge impact on them. What you say, do, or suggest, your patience, empathy and your generosity can make all the difference between a student who graduates and one who does not.

This Teaching Handbook addresses some of the questions you might have as a new faculty member and lists additional resources for you to consult. It has been written collaboratively by the Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning, the Director and staff of the Centre for Teaching and Learning Services (CTLS), and members

of the CTLS Advisory Committee. For more in-depth coverage of the topics here and other ideas on how to enhance your experience as a teacher, consult the CTLS website at <http://teaching.concordia.ca/>

Please allow me to take advantage of this opportunity to thank you for your commitment to Concordia and to our students, and to say that I will do whatever I can to support you in your work.

## I. WHO ARE CONCORDIA STUDENTS?

Paul Allen, Associate Professor, Theology

The pedagogical profile of students (at least those born since 1980) is a very mixed one: students typically tend to take less responsibility for their work while thriving on feedback and attentive evaluation.<sup>1</sup> This means that you may not always be able to anticipate the differences and what they imply in terms of teaching. Why does one student always arrive late for your 10 o'clock class? Why do some students habitually utilize only Wikipedia instead of authentic sources in essays? Why can some students not keep up with lab work? Bad habits that may seem reckless may have plausible explanations and potentially feasible resolutions. Maybe the student who arrives late must bring her child to a relative who is only available just before your class begins. Perhaps the student has been informed from authoritative sources that "copying and pasting" is equivalent to good research. Perhaps a student with mobility impairment needs assistance to perform lab work. Take the opportunity to get to know who is in your class so you can create a welcoming environment

for students with varying cultural perspectives, personal challenges and learning styles. A number of services exist to help you and your students find support and encouragement.

One of the key resources at Concordia is Advocacy and Support Services, with its centres for Native Students, International Students, Students with Disabilities and Chaplaincy. Counselling and Development's Writing Centre provides students with help with written English and study skills. In addition, Health Services and Financial Aid and Awards provide ongoing specialized services.

Here is a snapshot of Concordia students (latest statistics are for the 2008-2009 academic year from the Registrar and Advocacy and Support Services):

- 41,703 students enrolled (for summer, fall and winter courses 2008-09).
- In 2008-09, 51 per cent of program students are registered as part-time at the undergraduate level and 31 per cent part-time at the graduate level.
- Fifteen per cent of Concordia students list French as their mother tongue.
- There are approximately 4,500 international students from 143 countries.
- In 2008-09, there were 754 registered students with disabilities.
- In Faculty of Arts and Science programs, female students outnumber male students by 1.3 to 1 while in Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science programs, male students outnumber female students by 5 to 1.

<sup>1</sup>Wilson, L. O. (2005). *Teaching Millennial Students*.





## 2. SOME RULES OF THUMB ABOUT TEACHING

*Ollivier Dyens, Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning*

Teaching is one of the most rewarding and challenging professions! Many issues one may face when starting his or her teaching career are common to almost every professor. Here are some rules of thumb that may help you avoid some of the pitfalls:

- Imagine teaching as a platform supported by three separate pillars. The platform is the essence of what you want your students to learn. The first pillar represents information; the second, the student's interest; and the third, the pleasure you derive from teaching. For the platform to rise, all three pillars must also rise and equally so. If one rises more than the other, or if one shrinks while the others rise, the whole structure becomes unbalanced and the student's learning is affected.
- The best learning occurs when both students and professor are enjoying themselves. Be creative, imaginative, inventive! Remember, if you are not enjoying yourself, chances are students are not either.
- Students best respond to enthusiasm, passion, empathy and thorough preparation. Make sure that you are always as prepared as you can be.
- Make sure you always have a Plan B. Sometimes, things do not go as planned: the network is down, students that were scheduled to make an oral presentation are not present or you have covered everything that you had planned for a three-hour class in the first 45 minutes. What will you do then? Always, always have a backup plan, something that does not depend on machines or other people.

- Sometimes discussions in class can drift to subjects that are peripheral to the course's content. Control these drifts, but let them run their course. If students are engaged in a discussion, it is probably because the subject is dear to them.
- Remember that in most classes, what you are teaching is a methodology, a way of thinking, a critical structure. There are many ways to ensure that students acquire a critical methodology. Be open to different possibilities.
- Students will oftentimes try to avoid doing extra work if they can. This, of course, includes readings. Make sure that small incentives are built into your grading system to encourage students to go the extra mile (i.e. having a series of small quizzes, rewarding students who have done the readings, beginning each class with a few comments or questions on the readings, etc.).
- Many new professors expect their students to perform at the level they are most recently familiar with: that of the Ph.D.! Remember, you are dealing mostly with young persons who have not had your training. Further, most of them are still unsure about where they expect to be in a few years. Be compassionate.
- You can and should be, extremely demanding. Today's students will respond quite well to challenges as long as:
  - a) There are no surprises (this is where a well-thought-out course outline comes into play).
  - b) The professor is as demanding on himself as he is on the students.
  - c) Preparation has been adequate. Students will react quite negatively to a test that covers material for which they have not been prepared.
- Be clear and firm on plagiarism. There are specific university-wide rules on how to deal with these cases.

- Be patient when you are explaining a difficult concept or notion. Make sure everyone is following. Students who have not understood are often too embarrassed to say so or ask for clarification. Look at your class. Look at your students. Make eye contact.
- Teaching is an intellectual journey. That journey must be challenging, fascinating and pleasurable. Treat your course material as if it were a strange new land in which students have just set foot. You are their guide, the one they count on to find their way.

## 3. COURSE DEVELOPMENT

*Fred Szabo, Professor, Mathematics and Statistics*

Courses are the ever-changing reflections of our past and current states of knowledge and understanding of the world around us. You might therefore think that trying to find common starting points for courses in such vastly different fields such as science, engineering, humanities, art and other disciplines is like trying to compare apples and oranges. In spite of this diversity, course designers have come up with remarkably broad principles for course design.

### THREE STEPS

Here is a 3-step process for course design proposed by Wiggins and McTighe (2001):

#### Step 1: Identify desired results

What should students know, understand, and be able to do and why? What content is at the heart of the course curriculum? What important concepts or facts are difficult for students to understand? What enduring knowledge is desired?

#### Step 2: Determine acceptable evidence

How will you know if students have achieved the desired results and met accepted standards? What will you accept as evidence of student understanding and proficiency?

#### Step 3: Plan learning experiences and instruction

What knowledge and skills will students need to achieve desired results? What activities will equip students with needed skills and knowledge? What will need to be taught and how should it be taught in light of learning goals? What materials and resources are best suited to accomplish these goals? Is the overall design coherent and effective?

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Wiggins and McTighe also recommend building your course design around essential questions.

Essential questions do more than check students' factual knowledge or test what they have learned. They require students to reflect on the meaning of what they are learning—to grapple with the key questions and core ideas that gave rise to the content in the first place. They are questions that can be repeated and rephrased, helping both instructor and students maintain focus as new topics are introduced.

Essential questions help you with the course design process by bringing into focus the desired results for student learning. From there, you can develop assessment techniques and course activities that are aligned with your overall instructional goals. Once the course is underway, you can periodically revisit the essential questions to evaluate whether the learning outcomes are being met.





## 4. COURSE OUTLINE TEMPLATE

Ollivier Dyens, Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning

A course outline is an *agreement* between the professor (representing the University) and his/her students.

A course outline identifies how the course is structured, both pedagogically and administratively, and therefore must be as complete and cover as much pedagogical and administrative information as possible. The pedagogical objectives must be clearly stated.

It must explain the criteria used for grading. It must also state what it expects from students in terms of course work, preparation, assignment due dates and in-class behaviour. Sanctions must also be clearly indicated and explained. Professors are required to send a copy of their course outline to their department or unit.

**The following rubrics and information must be present in every course outline:**

### GENERAL INFORMATION

- Course title, number, credits, semester, year.
- Class date, time and location (campus, building, room number).
- Name and title of the instructor, Faculty and Department.
- Access to the instructor: office location, campus phone number, email, website (if available), office hours, preferred means of contact.
- Similar access information for teaching assistants, where applicable.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

- Calendar course description (must be identical to that in the calendar).
- Prerequisites.

*Optional:*

- Expanded course description.
- Specific knowledge or skills students should have before beginning the course (e.g., computer skills).
- If appropriate, explain what the course is not about or what topics will not be covered.

### OBJECTIVES

Clear statement of the knowledge, competencies or skills students are expected to achieve (e.g., synthesize information, make predictions, solve problems, etc.).

### SCHEDULE (may be subject to change)

- Assignments due dates.
- Exam dates.
- Legal holidays/No class dates.
- Special activities (e.g., group selection for project work, guest speaker, etc.).

*Optional:*

- Provide a general schedule of the main topics to be addressed and questions that will drive discussion.
- List DNE/DISC withdrawal dates.
- Include plan for make-up classes.

### COURSE MATERIALS

- List the required textbook(s) for the course.
- Indicate where the book(s) can be borrowed or purchased.
- If additional readings are required, list the articles and indicate where they can be obtained.
- Readings that have been placed on reserve in the Library should be indicated.

*Optional:*

- Suggested readings should also be listed.
- List other required resources (e.g., lab equipment, software, art supplies, etc.); indicate where they can be found and, if applicable, how much they will cost.

### GRADING

- Provide explicit information about assignments and grading procedures (e.g., term papers, exams, quizzes, participation).
- List clearly what percentage of the final grade each assignment is worth.
- Include the grading scale and the grading criteria.

*Optional:*

- Describe your department's policy on oral and written proficiency.
- Mention under what circumstances a student may fail the course.

### Please note:

**Once the semester has started, the grading scale should not be changed without either unanimous consent of students or consent from the chair.<sup>2</sup>**

### RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Include the following statements:

#### Plagiarism

The most common offense under the Academic Code of Conduct is plagiarism which the Code defines as "the presentation of the work of another person as one's own or without proper acknowledgement."

This could be material copied word for word from books, journals, internet sites, professor's course notes, etc. It could be material that is paraphrased but

closely resembles the original source. It could be the work of a fellow student, for example, an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, a paper or assignment completed by another student. It might be a paper purchased through one of the many available sources. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone - it can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables, and ideas. "Presentation" is not limited to written work. It also includes oral presentations, computer assignments and artistic works. Finally, if you translate the work of another person into French or English and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism.

### In Simple Words:

**Do not copy, paraphrase or translate anything from anywhere without saying from where you obtained it!**

Source: <http://provost.concordia.ca/academicintegrity/plagiarism>

For more detailed information on what to include in your course outline, download the Course Outline Template (May, 2009) from the CTLS website. [http://provost.concordia.ca/teaching\\_learning/common\\_outline](http://provost.concordia.ca/teaching_learning/common_outline)

### IMPROVING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Many students do not complete their program within five years. The reasons for it are numerous. Some students abandon their program for well-thought-out, pondered reasons. Most, however, fail to complete their degree because of preventable circumstances (financial, psychological, academic, etc.).

<sup>2</sup>Reasonable efforts must have been made to contact all students.





**More than 60** per cent of students who do not complete their degree are in good academic standing.

The University offers many services that can help students. Unfortunately, most students are not aware that these services actually exist.

Taking five minutes at the beginning of the semester to remind students what these services are and where to find them will go a long way in making sure students are given as many tools as possible to succeed academically.

To improve students' ability to complete their degree, it is **strongly recommended** that the following list of services be included in every course outline (remember that a student may experience problems at anytime during his or her academic career):

- Name of the Department's Academic Advisor
- Concordia Counselling and Development offers career services, psychological services, student learning services, etc.  
<http://cdev.concordia.ca/>
- The Concordia Library Citation and Style Guides  
<http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/citations.html>
- Advocacy and Support Services  
<http://supportservices.concordia.ca/>
- Student Transition Centre  
<http://stc.concordia.ca/>
- New Student Program  
<http://newstudent.concordia.ca/>

- Access Centre for Students with Disabilities  
<http://supportservices.concordia.ca/disabilities/>
- Student Success Centre  
<http://studentsuccess.concordia.ca/>
- The Academic Integrity Website  
<http://provost.concordia.ca/academicintegrity/>
- Financial Aid and Awards  
<http://faao.concordia.ca/main>
- Health Services  
<http://www-health.concordia.ca/>

## 5. KEEPING STUDENTS ATTENTIVE DURING LECTURES

*Linda Dyer, Professor, Management,  
and Kate Bligh, Lecturer, English and Theatre*

The lecture, often maligned for being a one-way communication tool, is still the most common teaching method, and the most effective for covering a lot of material. Skilled instructors can use the lecture to structure and synthesize course content while conveying their enthusiasm and inspiring their listeners. Still, studies show that students only pay attention for about fifteen minutes at a time. The question is how to keep students riveted.

Here are some specific ways you can keep students' attention during class. Some of these are taken from an

article in *Prism*, the American Society for Engineering Education's magazine (April 2003).

- Smile, and signal with your greeting and body language that you are pleased to be there: claim the student's attention before you launch into the subject of the lecture. Wear something colourful, even if it's just a tie or an accessory: it makes you much easier to look at for sustained periods of time.
- Focus on your audience. Consider your students' level of knowledge and understanding and structure your presentation accordingly. Maintain eye contact, begin in the middle of the lecture space, then move about from time to time.
- Address students (or some of them) by name whenever possible. The *My Concordia Portal* provides photographs of students that can be helpful in learning names. In larger classes you can make a cardboard name plaque for each student, which could be placed on the desk during class and returned to you at the end of class.
- Take some time to get to know your students and develop a rapport with them. You could try coming a few minutes early to class, and if numbers allow, requiring students to visit your office at least once during the term to review a draft assignment or discuss their progress.
- Let them know at the outset what the learning goal of the lecture is, how you propose to structure the session, and how the material relates to the assignment, exam or course outline.
- Instead of delivering an hour-long monologue, try dividing your lecture into 15-minute mini-lectures interspersed with short breaks. Each mini-lecture should have an introduction, main body and summary; the

introduction should connect to the previous mini-lecture and the summary should link to the one following.

- Structure the breaks between mini-lectures so that students focus on learning. Have students work in small groups to discuss the topic at hand, solve problems or develop questions for you. They can also use this time to read a hand-out, review their notes or compare their notes with others.
- Experiment with a combination of AV aids. Prepared transparencies and PowerPoint slides are great for the main body of your lecture, but use chalkboards and flipcharts to add spontaneity. Make use of images to convey information, not just words.
- Don't dim the lights and put all the focus on your slides. Make sure that students can see you—move around in the lighted areas of the room. A remote slide-changer can be helpful if you are using PowerPoint.
- Use images, models, objects, anecdotes and examples from your own experience to support your points as often as possible.
- Try not to read directly from your notes or slides. Be spontaneous and encourage questions.
- Wait calmly when you invite questions – for up to a minute! If there are none, suggest some points they might like to ask about. Welcome all questions – even if you choose not to respond to some of them.
- Repeat the two or three key points both during your lecture and at the end: repetition of these is an excellent teaching strategy.
- Observe other teachers in action. You can learn to be an outstanding teacher by watching others and discussing techniques with your peers. Contact a fellow teacher directly or speak to your department head to make arrangements. The CTLS can also advise you on whom to contact.





## SOME FACTORS THAT CAN MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR STUDENTS TO LISTEN TO YOU:

- Not looking at the audience – this can make them feel the material is beyond them.
- Speaking with your back turned as you write on the board – your speech will be inaudible at these times.
- Covering too much material, and/or speaking very quickly – a calm ‘walking pace’ speed is ideal. Even if you do cover all of your points at a very fast rate, the audience is unlikely to retain many of them.
- Uncomfortable body language – this includes crossed arms, hidden hands, obsessively repetitive gestures and swaying, and aggressive gestures, such as pointing at the audience.

*If you wish to address or improve any aspect of your lecture style, please contact the CTLS for support in doing so – they have many resources available.*

## 6. TEACHING WITH TECHNOLOGY

*Walcir Cardoso, Associate Professor, Education*

Technology permeates all areas of our lives and it is changing the way we teach and learn. The growing number of “digital natives” that come to Concordia puts high pressure on teachers to adapt to technological innovations that include course management systems (e.g., Moodle), social networking applications (e.g., Twitter, Facebook), and portable devices such as personal response systems (clickers) and media players. With so many possibilities, how does one decide which technology

is better suited to help you and your students achieve the pedagogical goals of your course?

Based on general educational principles and the resources available at Concordia, here are some ideas and tips of how to get started in exploring technological possibilities for your courses and to make them work for you and your students:

- Use technology with a purpose, as a *means* to achieve your pedagogical goals, not as a goal in itself (see some examples below).
- Choose a technology based on your audience (age, educational background, etc.), the goals of the course, the subject matter, the time you have, the resources available, and the results you expect.
- Create a learner-centred environment where students have a role in decision making and creating content (e.g., use the glossary module on Moodle for the design of a course-specific lexicon created by the students).
- Engage your students in active learning (e.g., use Moodle and its news forum, chats and blogs to foster peer instruction and collaboration among students, and then ask them to apply the acquired knowledge in other contexts).
- Use Moodle for communication purposes between you and individual students (e.g., via e-mail, instant messaging) and between the students themselves (e.g., via the news forum, instant messaging).
- Take advantage of technology to increase opportunities for different types of feedback: Use clickers to obtain immediate feedback in your lectures. For after-class feedback, use Moodle resources such as quizzes and journaling. For peer feedback, use wikis, blogs and the news forum.

- Use Moodle’s “Link to a file or web site” function to extend class discussions to reliable sites and thus expose your students to different ways of addressing the topic in question. Using the same function, you can also include class notes and audio/video recordings (podcasts) of your lectures.
- Take advantage of the versatile nature of Moodle to embrace different learning styles and personalities (e.g., after an oral class discussion, ask students to define key concepts in the glossary, preferably using illustrations and links to other sites. Later on, you can recycle this information in quizzes, class discussions, etc.).
- Finally, seek out individuals or services at your institution for advice and consultation. For technical support and services available (including Moodle), contact Concordia’s Instructional and Information Technology Services (IITS). For pedagogical support and advice on the use of technologies (courses, workshops, lectures, etc.), start with a visit to the CTLS website.

## 7. EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT

*Janette Barrington, Teaching Consultant, Centre for Teaching and Learning Services*

The best assessment methods are aligned with learning outcomes, course content and instructional strategies. Oftentimes, instructors choose their assessment methods once they have planned the course content. Another approach is to begin by defining in specific terms what you want students to understand and be able to do by the end of the course – the learning outcomes. Once you articulate these outcomes, you can devise assessment methods that measure how well students have achieved

them. Only then do you define the course content, shaping your ideas for the course to match the desired learning outcomes.

Assessment methods range from informal checks of understanding during class discussions and lab demonstrations to more performance-oriented techniques such as essays, tests, portfolios and oral presentations. Use a variety of testing methods throughout the course to gather different types of information about how students are doing. For example, a pop-quiz can be used to ascertain whether students have retained important facts, while a group debate will indicate how much thought they have given to a topic and whether they have researched alternate points of view.

Here are some additional tips, based on work by Polumba & Banta (1999) and Walvoord & Anderson (1998):

- Include a description of all assignments and tests in your course outline along with due dates.
- Develop grading criteria that reflect the nature of each assignment and the course’s learning outcomes, and share them with students beforehand. Explain how your grading scheme works and define your expectations for each letter grade.
- Check that tests and assignments are feasible in terms of workload.
- Use a variety of testing methods at various intervals throughout the course.
- If the course has TAs, involve them in test construction.
- Take precautions to avoid cheating and plagiarism, e.g. have students come to your office to review a draft of their assignment; conduct an internet survey of your assignment topics beforehand so you are familiar with on-line sources.



- Have at least one assignment due early in the semester and return it promptly. This will allow students to monitor their own progress and help you identify potential problems.
- As the course progresses, use surveys and focus groups to assess students' satisfaction. Although the results may not indicate how much students are learning, it gives you and your students the opportunity to reflect on the classroom experience.

## 8. THE FINAL EXAM

*Christopher Trueman, Professor,  
Electrical and Computer Engineering*

The final examination is the student's opportunity to display the knowledge he or she has gained in the course, and it is the professor's tool for ranking the students into outstanding, very good, satisfactory, marginal pass, and failure. In setting the questions, cover the material of the course uniformly and base the questions on the major topics of the course. Uniform coverage allows the student who did poorly on the mid-term test to show that he or she has mastered the material from the first segment of the course. Every exam question should be based directly on homework questions, so that a student who has diligently mastered the homework will find the large part of the final exam straightforward. One question, worth perhaps 10 or 15 per cent of the overall grade, can be more demanding, so that outstanding students can shine. If the final exam is too difficult, then most students have low scores, and the professor cannot rank the students. If the final exam is too easy, all the

scores are high, and it is impossible to explain to a student why the grade is poor.

Grade the final exam generously. In assigning letter grades to students, consider borderline cases individually. Does this student deserve a "D+" or is there enough in the exam booklet to award a "C-"? Grading is a somewhat blunt instrument and it is not reasonable to make pass/fail decisions based on differences of one per cent. If you grade carefully, you will never have to change your mind and ask your department chair to sign a change-of-grade form.

Students will come to your office to see their final examination booklet and ask about the grade they received. The student must be carefully supervised when he is looking through the final examination booklet because an unsupervised student might write something in the booklet, and then the exam cannot be re-read under the Academic Re-Evaluation procedure in the Undergraduate Calendar. You should explain how you evaluated each question, but you should not permit the student to try to negotiate a higher grade.

It is your job to evaluate the student's work and if you have done your job carefully, there is no need to reconsider. Allowing the student to compare his solution with the correct solution can help to convince him that the grade is appropriate.

The course outline should clearly state what percentage of the course is allotted to homework, to the laboratory or project, to the mid-term test, and to the final examination. If a student's grade on the mid-term test is poor, can the mid-term grade be discarded and the final count for more? This encourages students not to drop the

course, but instead to improve their study habits to earn a passing grade with a good final examination.

A well-designed course has homework assignments that gradually develop the student's skills over the semester and that directly support mid-term and final examination questions. The student feels rewarded for his or her hard work over the semester.

## 9. ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

*Olivia Rovinescu, Director,  
Centre for Teaching and Learning Services*

At Concordia, the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities plays a key role in assisting students to integrate as fully as possible into the University community. It also assists faculty with understanding and accommodating the needs of students who are visually impaired, mobility impaired, hearing impaired, learning disabled, and those with health related disabilities. Often, it can be difficult for an instructor to clearly assess what kind of accommodation is needed or what is fair to the student. Therefore, the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities will help you with any situation or question that you have. They can, for example, arrange for exams and quizzes to be printed in Braille or a film to be captioned; they can also make special exam accommodations for students and provide tips on how to lecture effectively when there is a hearing or visually impaired student in the class.

Below you will find examples of teaching techniques that benefit all students, but are especially useful for students who have disabilities (based on resources from DO-IT at the University of Washington at <http://www.washington.edu>). For additional information, please visit the CTLS website.

### CLASSROOM

- Select course materials early so that students and the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities have enough time to translate them to audio-tape, Braille, or large print.
- Make syllabi, short assignment sheets, and reading lists available in electronic format (e.g., disk, electronic mail, WWW).
- Face the class when speaking. Repeat discussion questions.
- Write key phrases and lecture outlines on the blackboard or overhead projector.

### LABORATORY

- Take the student on a tour of the lab he/she will be working in. Discuss safety concerns.
- Assign group lab projects in which all students contribute according to their abilities.
- Arrange lab equipment so that it is easily accessible.
- Give both oral and written lab instructions.

### EXAMINATION AND FIELDWORK

- Some students will require extra time to transcribe or process test questions; follow campus policies regarding extra time on examinations. Contact the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities for specific details and guidelines.
- Consider allowing students to turn in exams via electronic mail or USB key.



- Attempt to include students with disabilities in field work opportunities, rather than automatically suggesting non-field work alternatives. Include special needs in requests for field trip vehicle reservations.

## 10. CONFLICTS WITH STUDENTS

*Lorrie Blair, Associate Professor, Art Education*

Despite careful planning and a positive classroom environment, difficult situations may arise from time to time. Whether a conflict occurs between you and a student or between students themselves, your job is to manage the situation so that everyone feels safe and learning can continue.

To prevent problems from the beginning, set clear expectations about students' behaviour, which you could include in the course outline and present in class. Be clear about what will happen if these ground rules are not followed and repeat them as necessary throughout the semester.

If a student is disruptive in class, be sure to address the issue. Sometimes pausing during the middle of your lecture or making eye contact will be enough to make the student stop; other times you may have to issue a verbal warning or meet the student after class to discuss the problem. If you are uncomfortable about meeting the student alone, ask a colleague to assist you by staying nearby to keep an eye on things, and leave your office door open during the meeting. Listen to the student

carefully and, if the problem is beyond your area of expertise, refer the student to the appropriate student service on campus. (For more information, see *Selected Resources on Campus* at the end of this Handbook.)

If the disruptive behaviour continues, speak to someone. Departmental chairs and colleagues may be able to fill you in on the history of your class or its particular culture. They may also be willing to visit your class and offer suggestions for improving the situation. The Office of Rights and Responsibilities has a website with valuable tips on handling disruptive behaviour (<http://rights.concordia.ca>) and the advisor can meet with you to help evaluate your options. Consultations are completely confidential and you do not have to file a complaint in order to get information or advice. The CTLS also offers a classroom observation service and can work with you to diagnose the problem and devise solutions. We have numerous readings and videos about disruptive behaviour and can help direct you to other pertinent resources.

In very few cases, the problem is so serious that you wish to file a complaint under the Code of Rights and Responsibilities through the Office of Right and Responsibilities. In fact, if you do experience a potentially threatening situation, you should report it to an advisor right away. Whatever course of action you take, it is recommended that you document the details of what happened for future reference if needed. Keep a record of what happened, when and where it happened, and what you did to correct the situation. It is also advisable to keep a record of all email correspondences.

If an incident occurs in your class that causes you to fear for your safety or that of your students, call Security immediately. Give your name and location and explain the

danger. Always know the numbers to call (SGW: 514-848-2424 ext. 3717; Loyola 514-848-2424 ext. 3707). If you use an emergency phone, you only have to lift the receiver and wait for an officer to respond.

## 11. SUPERVISING GRADUATE STUDENTS

*Sally Cole, Associate Dean, Student Affairs, Graduate Studies*

The student-supervisor relationship is at the heart of graduate student success. Research documents that the mentoring provided by a supervisor is as important to graduate students as financial support.

It is a complex relationship that involves academic mentorship and research training as well as professional and career advising. The student-supervisor relationship varies depending on the nature of the program and the disciplinary traditions within which research is conducted (e.g., lab or studio; individual or team research; fieldwork or text analysis).

Despite the variability, there are some underlying principles of graduate supervision:

- First and foremost, this is a reciprocal relationship: both supervisor and student have a responsibility to maintain contact and keep each other informed of program requirements; university regulations and deadlines; personal timetables and absences; and, any problems that may arise.
- Supervisors should be available on a regular basis to help graduate students with the design of research

questions; the formulation of methods; the discussion and presentation of results; and, possible publication. The frequency of meetings depends on the discipline: in many cases, weekly meetings are essential; for others, monthly meetings are satisfactory.

- Graduate supervisors must also ensure their students meet the standards – academic and ethical – of the university and the discipline.

*In initial meetings with the student, the supervisor discusses:*

- Expected flow of progress through the program and a written plan/ timetable of target dates to help the student meet degree requirements.
- Funding sources and duration; applications for grants and scholarships.
- Research ethics and citation practices; standards of academic integrity; Academic Code of Conduct.
- Expectations regarding conference presentations and publications.
- Intellectual property; authorship; acknowledgement of student's work.
- Any technical, language and/or writing skills training that the student may need.
- Preferred frequency and means of keeping in contact with one another.
- The School of Graduate Studies Online Annual Progress Reports that are completed by both student and supervisor.
- Appropriate university services for students with special needs.

*For further information, see:*

Canadian Association of Graduate Studies 2008 Guiding Principles for Graduate Student Supervision  
<http://www.cags.ca/pages/en/publications/cags-publications.php>



Concordia University Guidelines for Supervisors and Graduate Students

<http://graduatestudies.concordia.ca/documents/formsandpublications/graduatehandbooks/guidelinessupervisorsandstudents.pdf>

The University of British Columbia's Handbook of Graduate Supervision

<http://www.grad.ubc.ca/students/supervision/index.asp>

## 12. COURSE EVALUATION

*Olivia Rovinescu, Director,  
Centre for Teaching and Learning Services*

Students at Concordia fill in evaluation questionnaires toward the end of each semester. The questionnaires are anonymous and the results can be used to help improve courses and teaching effectiveness. The mix of quantitative and qualitative questions allows students to rate certain aspects of the course and provide written comments. The results are confidential. Course evaluations are often a source of stress for instructors, but they can also provide constructive feedback.

### EVALUATIONS FOR FULL-TIME FACULTY MEMBERS

Students enter the online course evaluation system via the MyConcordia Portal using their Netname and password. The system automatically knows which courses students are registered in and will prompt them to evaluate these courses. Because these codes protect sensitive academic and financial information it is highly unlikely that a student would share his or her Netname

and password. Students who discontinue a course are not able to evaluate it. Students auditing a course have no access to the evaluations, neither do students registered at other universities who are taking courses at Concordia. Once an evaluation is complete, the system prevents the student from evaluating the same course again.

Students who conduct their evaluations online are reminded by personalized emails several times during the evaluation period to go online to evaluate their professors. It is recommended that professors remind their students to complete the evaluations, mentioning how their comments will improve the course for future students. Evidence shows that students are less likely to participate in online course evaluations because of a perceived lack of anonymity and the perception that course evaluations have no impact. Students believe that the results from course evaluations are not considered when evaluating the teaching and the learning process. You can increase the response rate by explaining to students how the University guarantees their anonymity and assesses course evaluations. Faculty members can check the evaluation progress in two places: at the top of the Main Menu of the "Faculty and Staff Services" on the MyConcordia Portal and in "Course Evaluation Setup and Control" screen, the "Reg" column shows the total number of registered students and the "Ans" column shows the number of students who have already submitted an evaluation.

### EVALUATIONS FOR PART-TIME FACULTY MEMBERS

Because of specifications in the CUPFA Collective Agreement, part-time faculty members administer evaluations in class by using the following protocol:

- Announce that evaluations will be conducted a week in advance and explain the procedures (see below).
- Choose a day when the majority of students will be present.
- Ask students for specific feedback on what you do well and suggestions on how to improve.
- Instruct students to write their comments and not to sign their names.
- A student should be chosen to administer the questionnaires.
- The instructor **must** leave the room during the evaluation period.
- Both the administering student and the instructor must sign the sealed package and mark the date of administration.
- The package should be taken by the student to the nearest Security/Information desk.

Student comments are typed by the Course Evaluation Office and sent directly to the part-time faculty member.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR ALL FACULTY MEMBERS

The statistical reports are available online by accessing the MyConcordia Portal. The chair of the department has access to the statistical information but not to the comments.

Any statistics based on fewer than ten student responses should be interpreted with caution. Classes with fewer than five students are not evaluated at all, since in any statistical calculation, the smaller the sample size the less reliable the results. If a larger class has less than five students responding, results will include a disclaimer in red that indicates: "Disclaimer: Because there are less than five students responding, this evaluation is statistically invalid." Statistical results are still displayed so that professors can see how the students responded and comments are available.

Look at the poll before interpreting results: when "1" is best, the lower the score the better; when "5" is best answer, the higher the score the better.

Most professors believe that constructive written comments help them improve their course. These comments often contain helpful, specific suggestions. In fact, some professors even say that this is the most useful part of the evaluation. In addition, the numerical responses can provide you with a means of contextualizing responses to your teaching in relation to other instructors in your department or Faculty.

To complement the information from these evaluations, the CTLS recommends that instructors conduct their own mid-term evaluation to gather formative feedback from students. Sample questions to include in a handout are: What is helping your learning in this course? What is hindering your learning in this course? What suggestions for improvement do you have? With this type of formative evaluation, you can act on the results immediately, adjusting your instructional strategies if necessary. You will find a sample of the mid-term evaluation on the CTLS website. If you wish to conduct an online mid-term evaluation, contact Janette Barrington, [jbarri@alcor.concordia.ca](mailto:jbarri@alcor.concordia.ca).

For more information:  
<http://teaching.concordia.ca/evaluation/index.html>

### HOW TO INTERPRET A COURSE EVALUATION

Sometimes professors are discouraged by their course evaluation results. I thought I did great!!? I don't understand why someone would write something so negative?



Here are a few rules of thumb on course evaluations:

- Every professor has a few students who strongly dislike them whatever they do. Take it in stride.
- On the other hand, every professor has a few students who like them, whatever they do. Do not get too comfortable.
- You usually know in advance how well you did in class. Trust your judgment when the results (either positive or negative) do not match what you have felt.
- When results are not as good as expected, the reason is usually one of communication. Somehow, something the professor did or said was not perceived as was expected by students.

Be honest with students, right from the start. Tell them what to expect, how much work is involved, what type of professor you are. Many poorer results are caused by a misalignment between what the professor and the student expect from one another.

If you would like help interpreting the results of your evaluation, a member of the CTLS team will meet with you. Just contact us to set up a meeting and bring your evaluation results along.

### 13. PREPARING A TEACHING DOSSIER

*Janette Barrington, Teaching Consultant,  
Centre for Teaching and Learning Services*

A teaching dossier helps promotion and renewal committees learn about your major teaching accomplishments. It is a tool for self-reflection and a means

of documenting your evolution as a teacher. The range of items to include in a dossier varies greatly between faculty members and departments so be sure to consult with your department chair, colleagues and promotion/tenure committee for specific instructions. The CUFA Collective Agreement (section 14.01.3) also outlines what is reviewed when assessing teaching performance. <http://www.cufa.net>

#### WHAT DOES A TYPICAL TEACHING DOSSIER INCLUDE?

- Introductory narrative describing your achievements, date of hire and number of years of service (2-3 pages).
- Personal teaching statement (1 page).
- All teaching assignments (term, code, name, level, number of students).
- All statistical student evaluation results for each course section.
- All course outlines and sample assignments, examinations, projects.
- Original course materials (new course packs, curriculum contributions, etc.).
- Descriptions of new teaching techniques you have tried, and the results.
- Published textbooks.
- All tutorial and thesis supervision.
- Teaching awards and honours.
- Other evidence of teaching excellence, i.e. the recognition of peers, your presence in the media and the facilitation of teaching workshops.

For help in articulating a personal teaching statement, respond to these questions posed by Goodyear & Allchin, (1998): What motivates me to learn (this subject)? Is this what motivates my students? How do they prefer to learn? What learning outcomes do I expect from teaching? What kind of student-teacher relationship do I strive

for? What habits, attitudes or methods characterize my achievements? What values do I impart to students?

Instructions on what to include and examples of teaching dossiers can be found on the CTLS website at: <http://teaching.concordia.ca/teachingdossier/>

#### TIPS AND STRATEGIES

- Don't assume that everyone knows you and what you have done. Write a 2-3 page narrative about your achievements and refer to evidence in appendices.
- Be as complete and well organized as possible. Use a Table of Contents and separators to make the dossier easy to consult.
- Seek feedback from tenured colleagues, CUFA representatives and CTLS teaching consultants.
- If appropriate, attach letters of contract renewals from DPC and FPTC (any advice or restriction should be answered in the narrative).
- Attach complete CV.
- Always keep a copy.

### 14. LEARN MORE ABOUT TEACHING

*Janette Barrington, Teaching Consultant,  
Centre for Teaching and Learning Services*

There are many ways to strengthen your teaching skills and enrich your experience as a new faculty member. Here are some suggestions:

- Share your classroom experience with colleagues by attending CTLS workshops, facilitating CTLS workshops and/or observing one another's classes.

- Read one of the teaching and learning classics, such as William J. McKeachie's *Teaching Tips* (1999) or Barbara Gross Davis' *Tools for Teaching* (1999).
- Become an active member of the Concordia teaching community. Find a mentor, develop a co-teaching relationship with one of your colleagues, or serve on a university teaching-related committee.
- Join national associations or subscribe to online discussion groups. One highly recommended listserv about faculty development is Tomorrow's Professor (at <http://cis.stanford.edu/structure/tomprof/listserver.html>) which sends out brief bi-weekly articles to all members.
- Start a reflective journal to evaluate your teaching. Use this journal to write about your instructional goals, the methods you choose to reach these goals and alternatives you could try. Think about what works in your classroom and what could use improvement—try using these reflections as a springboard for action.

The CTLS is always available to help you enhance your teaching. Our mandate is not to prescribe specific techniques or advance a particular school of thought: we promote excellence in teaching by helping faculty explore new ideas and approaches to instruction. This handbook gives you a taste of the issues with which we work. We also offer a wide range of services:

- Faculty, departmental and university-wide workshops
- One-on-one consultations
- Interpretation of student evaluations
- Teaching dossier support
- A lending library
- Online teaching resources
- An original video series, highlighting some of Concordia's best instructors



## KEY CONCORDIA DOCUMENTS

### ACADEMIC CODE OF CONDUCT

Sets standards for behaviour for all members of the University community. Defines the offences that constitute academic misconduct and sets out procedures to deal with them.

<http://secretariat.concordia.ca/policies/academic/en/AcademicCodeConduct2008.pdf>

### CODE OF RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Defines non-academic offences and related procedures (discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, threatening or violent conduct and offences against property)

<http://secretariat.concordia.ca/policies/bd/en/BD-3.pdf>

### CONCORDIA'S CODE OF ETHICS

Presents guidelines for ethical actions. Topics include: academic integrity, integrity in research, scholarship and creative activity, integrity in university governance, conflicts of interest, attending to ethics, and the raising and hearing of formal complaints.

<http://secretariat.concordia.ca/policies/bd/en/BD-4.pdf>

### COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS – PART-TIME AND FULL-TIME FACULTY MEMBERS

<http://hr.concordia.ca/collectiveagreements/download/>

### UNDERGRADUATE CALENDAR

Defines all academic programs and the regulations which pertain to them.

<http://registrar.concordia.ca/calendar>

### GRADUATE HANDBOOKS

Presents standards, guidelines and recommendations for research and graduate education.

<http://graduatestudies.concordia.ca/formsandpublications/graduatehandbooks>

### CONCORDIA TA HANDBOOK

Outlines the responsibilities of TAs at Concordia and provides strategies for instruction.

<http://teaching.concordia.ca/resources/TA>

### POLICY ON ACCESSIBILITY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Establishes ways to ensure accessibility to academic programs and physical facilities.

<http://supportservices.concordia.ca/pdf/VRS-14.pdf>

### OFFICIAL CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY POLICIES

The University Secretariat's homepage for all of Concordia's official policies.

<http://secretariat.concordia.ca/policies>

## SELECTED RESOURCES ON CAMPUS

Concordia offers a multitude of services to ensure that faculty members, staff and students experience the full scope of university life and are as satisfied as possible.

Here is a list of some of the most important resources on campus. Refer to it for your own needs, as well as those of your students.

Please note that the extensions given below follow the general University phone number: 514-848-2424.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

### • Centre for Teaching and Learning Services

promotes teaching excellence through a wide range of services.

<http://teaching.concordia.ca>

Loyola: ext. 2495

### • Student Learning Services

helps students develop learning skills and strategies.

<http://learning.concordia.ca>

SGW: ext. 3545 Loyola: ext. 3555

## TEACHING MATERIALS, MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

### • Bookstores

have one site on each campus.

<http://web2.concordia.ca/bookstore>

SGW: ext. 3615

### • Instructional and Information Technology (IITS)

provides services in computing, voice and data communications systems, instructional technology and media development.

<http://iits.concordia.ca>

SGW: ext. 7600

### • Libraries

each campus supports the programs offered on that site.

<http://library.concordia.ca/>

SGW: ext. 7777 Loyola: ext. 7766

### • The Concordia Library Citation and Style Guides:

<http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/citations.html>

## RESEARCH

### • Office of Research

provides information about sources of funding, writing proposals, preparing

budgets, financial administration of a grant, useful contacts and other guidelines.

<http://oor.concordia.ca> SGW: ext. 4888

## RESOLVING CONFLICTS

### • Ombuds Office

provides confidential services to help students, staff and faculty deal with problems and complaints concerning any area or department in the University.

[http://web2.concordia.ca/rights\\_resp\\_ombuds](http://web2.concordia.ca/rights_resp_ombuds)

SGW: ext. 4964

### • Office of Rights and Responsibilities

administers the Code of Rights and Responsibilities, which sets standards of conduct for all members of the community.

<http://rights.concordia.ca>

SGW: ext. 4857

## ADMINISTRATION

### • University Secretariat

serves as the administrative arm of the Secretary-General and General Counsel, the Board of Governors and the University.

<http://secretariat.concordia.ca>

SGW: ext. 4854

### • Office of the Provost

is responsible for overseeing the administration of academic activities: research, teaching and curriculum.

<http://provost.concordia.ca>

SGW: ext. 4847

### • The Academic Integrity Website

<http://provost.concordia.ca/academicintegrity>



## ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT SERVICES

- **Advocacy and Support Services**  
<http://supportservices.concordia.ca>  
Loyola ext. 3536
- **Centre for Native Education** offers support to First Nations Students. Provides academic advising and referral, tutoring, a documentation centre, computer facilities and access to online library catalogues.  
<http://supportservices.concordia.ca/nativecentre>  
SGW: ext. 7327
- **Multi-Faith Chaplaincy** provides spiritual development activities, religious services, social justice action and community involvement and support for students.  
<http://deanofstudents.concordia.ca/chaplaincy>  
SGW: ext. 3593 Loyola: ext. 3588
- **International Students Office** provides support services to help international students adjust to life and study in Canada  
<http://supportservices.concordia.ca/iso>  
SGW: ext. 3515
- **Access Centre for Students with Disabilities** provides programs and services that support the integration and independence of students with disabilities into the University community.  
<http://supportservices.concordia.ca/disabilities>  
SGW: ext. 3525 Loyola: ext. 3536
- **Day Care Centres** offer child care services for children of students, faculty, and staff.  
<http://deanofstudents.concordia.ca/childcare/index.shtml>  
SGW: ext. 8789 LOY: ext. 7788

## EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

- **Advocacy and Support Services**  
<http://supportservices.concordia.ca>
- **Concordia Counselling and Development** offers career services, psychological services, student learning services, etc.  
<http://cdev.concordia.ca>  
SGW: ext. 3545 Loyola: ext. 3555
- **Health Services** has a clinic on each campus for students, staff and faculty.  
<http://www-health.concordia.ca>  
SGW: ext. 3565 Loyola: ext. 3575
- **Recreation and Athletics** offer a wide range of activities on both campuses.  
<http://athletics.concordia.ca>  
SGW: ext. 3860 Loyola: ext. 3857

## STUDENT LIFE

- **Student Transition Centre** provides mature students with the academic guidance and moral support they need for full participation in mainstream university life.  
<http://stc.concordia.ca>  
SGW: ext. 3890 Loyola: ext. 3895
- **2110 Centre for Gender Advocacy** (formerly the Concordia Women's Centre) works against barriers by offering a safe, accessible space, affordable services, and information and resources.  
<http://www.centre2110.org>  
[centre2110@gmail.com](mailto:centre2110@gmail.com)  
SGW: ext. 7431

- **Q2 Ally Network** works to support sexual diversity and enhance the experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning (LGBTQ) members of the Concordia community.  
SGW: ext. 4389
- **Student Success Centre**  
<http://studentsuccess.concordia.ca>
- **New Student Program**  
<http://newstudent.concordia.ca>
- **Financial Aid and Awards**  
<http://faao.concordia.ca/main>

## SELECTED E-READINGS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Bransford, J.D. Brown, A. L., and Cocking, R.R. (eds.) (1999) *The Design of Learning Environments*, Chapter 6, *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School*. National Academy of Sciences.  
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Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J. (1998). *Understanding by design*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall Inc.



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